



Council on American-Islamic Relations

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Assistant Attorney General Thomas E. Perez Civil Rights Division Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW,
Washington, DC 20530

Via Fax: (202) 514-0293

SUBJECT: Request that you allow the safe passage back to the US of Yonas Fikre and Investigate the FBI's involvement in his torture and detention in the United Arab Emirates

Dear Mr. Perez:

This letter is respectfully submitted by attorneys Gadeir Abbas and Thomas Nelson on behalf of Mr. Yonas Fikre, an American citizen and resident of Oregon. We hereby request that this office investigate the FBI's involvement in his torture and ensure that Mr. Fikre can return to the United States unobstructed.

In April 2010, Mr. Fikre was approached by two Portland FBI agents while he was living and working in Sudan. These FBI agents--[REDACTED]--indicated that unless Mr. Fikre became their undercover informant he would be unable to return to the United States, because he had been placed on the No Fly List. In addition to promising Mr. Fikre money in exchange for his agreement to become their informant, the FBI agents suggested that there would be negative repercussions to him and his family if he did not agree.

The FBI agents continued their interrogation of Mr. Fikre despite him having requested his attorney and an end to the encounter. During the interrogation, Mr. Fikre was asked improper questions about his religious beliefs and practices as well as those of the Portland Muslim community of which he was once a part. The questions included inquiries into what an imam at a mosque in Portland discusses in his sermons.

Soon after Mr. Fikre's meeting with the FBI, he noticed that he was being followed by Sudanese police. Mr. Fikre's acquaintances in Sudan informed him that agents had been asking for information about him. Not feeling safe, Mr. Fikre decided to travel to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to live and work.

On June 1, 2011, Mr. Fikre was abducted by non-uniformed police, blindfolded, and taken to a torture facility near Abu Dhabi. For several months, Mr. Fikre was beaten, forced to maintain stress positions until he lost consciousness, and threats against his life. At one point, his torturers strung tubing around his neck and indicated that they could choke and kill him whenever they desired.

Mr. Fikre's torturers in UAE asked him questions that were substantially identical to those questions posed to him by [REDACTED] Furthermore, at one point during Mr. Fikre's detention, his torturers confirmed that the FBI had been involved in the egregious acts to which he had been subjected.

This disturbing case fits a pattern of proxy detention in which American Muslims are detained in other nations or prevented from returning home in a manner that is designed to circumvent their constitutional rights. The FBI cannot shirk its constitutional obligations by enlisting others to do what the Constitution makes clear FBI agents cannot.

Earlier this year, CAIR called for an investigation into acts of "coercion and intimidation" allegedly used by the FBI's Portland Field Office to pressure Muslim citizens into giving up their constitutional rights if they wished to return to the United States from overseas. Fikre is originally from Portland.

To date, we have had no response to that request.

I therefore respectfully request that the Department of Justice investigate the FBI agents involved in this incident to determine whether Mr. Fikre was detained and tortured at the behest of any agent of the U.S. government. I also request that Mr. Fikre be allowed to return to his our country without further unconstitutional interference.

Sincerely,

Gadeir Abbas, Esq. and Thomas Nelson, Esq.
Attorneys for Yonas Fikre